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Abstract

Including the General Aptitude Test Battery (GATB) in a school testing program should be the result of careful planning and formulation of goals. The investment may, however, be worth the advantages that can be achieved by providing students with information that may help them formulate individual educational and vocational goals and make related decisions. Dangers to the use of the GATB do exist: (1) it could become a tool for screening and placement of students, and (2) it could be used on a "crisis" basis, just prior to the need for making choices. Test experiences should be planned well in advance of a decision point, allowing the student time to consider, evaluate, and assimilate new information learned about himself and the possible relevance this information has to his goals and the choices open to him. Some of the ways a counselor could use the GATB are to: (1) help students develop greater self understanding, (2) help students to understand possible aptitude strengths, and (3) help students to relate test performance to educational and vocational information. (Author/KJ)

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RATIONALE FOR USE OF THE GENERAL APTITUDE TEST BATTERY WITH SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

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The General Aptitude Test Battery (GATB) is regarded as an excellent tool for facilitating within our cultural framework the liberating and humanizing goal of education. The GATB constitutes a comprehensive system of interrelated concepts, and to a greater degree than any other multiple aptitude test battery presently available, by design and measurement, has been able to identify, describe, and relate human attributes to culturally significant systems of occupational data and information. The total GATB system therefore comprises a distinctive rationality, valid when understood and used with probity within the unique range of that rationality.

Much of the growing mistrust for instruments of this nature seems to be founded in our collective inability to recognize and respect the validity limits of the instruments we use, to the degree, in fact, that the tests are now frequently chastised or dubbed as "discriminatory." Perhaps if the line of disjointure between tests and the uses to which we put them were more obvious, we would be inquiring of ourselves and of our colleagues concerning the validity of the rationale underlying our respective guidance, educational or employment office programs. The perspective adopted here suggests that the solution may not be undue reluctance in introducing tests of this nature into an educational

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setting or discontinuance of aptitude testing and study of the occupational and educational significance of aptitude, but rather, in further exploration of the meaning, in human terms, of the situations and contexts in which they are being used. These tests and the related occupational data have, if anything, been "overly helpful" in their being able to account, either descriptively or predictively, for most of the presently manageable variance in occupational studies - thus allowing dependence for those among us, possessing more technical than human competence.

The position taken in this paper at this time is that the GATB, though deemed an exemplory instrument for vocational guidance purposes, will, as we are able to clarify and expand the rational base, provide possibilities that will become more manifest and feasible for educational utilization of the test battery with secondary school students. In this regard, then, expansion of the rational base would include conceptualizing and establishing relationships somewhat like the following: Vocational Guidance is considered as a significant aspect of Guidance. Guidance is regarded as a mode of Education and Education believed, when optionally conceived to be a culturally determined form of liberating and humanizing process. Education, as such, is defined as the process of growth in the individual's ability to live purposefully within his culture, with regard to the dignity of others, and of attaining, through dialogue, value which serves to increase self awareness and the corresponding capacity to be relevant in changing situations.

A basic tenet then, is that the GATB can be useful to the counselor as a way of extending freedom to the individual student in providing him opportunity for increase in competence to determine value

and integrate through the purposeful pursuit of his goals these values into a more substantive sense of self. The emergence of this sense of self with its increasingly more identifiable uniqueness and directionfulness constitutes the humanization of the individual. This emerging sense of self is, to a significant extent, dependent upon the quality of the student's educational encounters. It is the contention of this writer that experiences of the nature possible through the use of the GATB, with its potential for increasing self understanding and possibilities for relating these understandings to culturally relevant occupational information, can be an important part.

Appreciation for the mounting possibilities associated with the educational use of the GATB seems contingent upon the now growing and deepening awareness that aptitude tests are more easily appropriated by an institution or agency for the purpose of charting the educational and vocational destiny of youth than they are in providing these individuals with experience and information useful in exploring the full range of their experience. Allowing them opportunity to abstract meaning from that experience would increase the likelihood of choice, associated with career or vocation, to be accompanied by personal commitment. The key in determining which of the two different modes will tend to dominate utilization of these tests does not reside within test instruments or systems per se but is clearly related to the counselor's comprehension of the liberating and humanizing goal of education and his competency in translating these understandings into educational and guidance program. The danger, so common it largely exists unnoticed, is the continuation of a process of education or of services to youth that seek predominately not the humanization of the individual, but his socialization; causing more than allowing, his

achievement of cultural relevance; systematically soliciting conformity without his direct consent; holding greater respect for collective behavior and foisting such normativeness on individual; and further, in extending an education that persists in regarding human excellence as a comparative phenomenon - creating the evil it eventually returns to vanquish.

The process of clarifying and extending the rational base involves our conscious intent to examine the meanings of what we are presently doing, first within the context of those areas of program for which we individually hold responsibility, then extending out in the form of dialogue to the larger context of the institutions in which we work. Specific solutions to eternal problems that haunt us and the "operationally defined" ways of conducting the business of education so earnestly sought, should naturally issue from this rationality. This would allow us, as educators, to proceed with commitment to education of the individual, yet with tentativeness in regard to method in education in view of the changing and expanding character of our culture. In this case the very conduct of education would include the unprompted provision of vocational guidance because career in its broadest sense is a very natural expression within our culture of humanness.

The remaining portion of this paper is devoted to brief suggestions considered key in illustrating this rationale. The implications deal with the administration and interpretation of the GATB and relate further to the conduct of training programs we, as a state education agency, provide for school counselors in the use of the GATB.

1. Test validity is established in relation to groups of individuals participating in the test standardization. Determining the validity of a particular individual's test performance requires competency that goes beyond correct test administration procedure. The examiner should be alert to the manner in which an individual takes a test and allow important understandings relating to his test performance to be included, along with the perceptions of the individual regarding the test experience, in determining the meaning of the test scores. In terms of educational goals therefore, seeking to determine the individual validity for test scores includes, as well as proper test administration, competent counseling to help the student to determine the personal significance of his test performance and assist him in relating his performance to relevant occupational possibilities. It is believed, at least as far as schools are concerned, that the best interpreter of test performance is the counselor who has administered the test.
2. A second suggestion relates to group test interpretation. It is possible to achieve in a significant way, the educational goals considered important through student interaction in group test interpretation. There is of course the obvious advantage of reducing the time required of the counselor in presenting basic information about the test and occupational data but the advantage of primary importance is in allowing students the opportunity to share their perceptions of the test and test experience, understanding of the meaning and value of aptitude, possible inter-

pretation of their performance and test scores and the significance of related occupational information. It is here where it is possible to allow understanding and respect for the differences both within an individual and among individuals of the groups tc develop.

3. The final implication to be discussed, relates to application of this rationale, to the special training programs we conduct for school counselors in the use of the GATB. The obvious goal of the training is to provide the counselors with the information and practice necessary for administration and interpretation of the battery. As important however, is the goal of sharing with them a basic concern and respect for the individual. We purpose to assist them to achieve at least in regard to the GATB, mastery and in relation to their profession as educators a freedom that grows out of increased human competency. Perhaps it goes without saying - if the most significant goal of education deals with the liberating and humanizing of the individual in a culturally related way, this goal should apply it seems to counselors as well as students.

EDUCATIONAL USES OF THE GATB

Including the GATB in a school testing program should be the result of careful planning and formulation of goals. Its use imposes responsibilities both in terms of the financial expenditure for test materials and the demands on counselor time for test administration and interpretation. The investment may, however, be worth the advantages that can be achieved by providing students with information that may help them formulate individual educational and vocational goals and make related decisions. Consideration of the advantages and limitations that the GATB might have for a school guidance program should be an important part of the decision to use the test.

A danger associated with the use of the GATB in secondary schools is related to its potential for becoming primarily a tool for screening and selecting students for placement in various school programs. The focus on using test results might be more appropriately geared to helping students develop greater competency in identifying and defining personal goals and in evaluating alternatives in terms of school programs that they may consider relevant.

An additional danger exists when test results are used on a "crisis" basis, just prior to the need for making choices. This places undesirable importance on the test, allowing the results to become a possible determinant of choice. A student may acquiesce to the seeming authority of the test results (or institution) and not exercise personal responsibility in the decision. Test results used in this manner disregard the developmental nature of choice as a function of personal commitment.

Test experiences could be planned well in advance of the time a student will be making a decision, allowing him freedom to consider, evaluate, and assimilate new information learned about himself and the possible relevance this information has to his goals and the choices open to him. The greatest advantage may be achieved when the test experience is planned as part of a number of experiences designed to help students exercise personal responsibility in making choices.

Some of the possible ways in which the GATB may be used by school counselors to help students are as follows:

> Help students develop greater self understanding. Test results can be used to help answer the question, "What am I like?" Frequently students, if given the opportunity will during the test interpretation be able to relate their test performance to actual personal experiences and activities involving special abilities they may have.

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Help students develop an understanding of their possible aptitude strengths. Students are usually aware of their verbal and numerical abilities as a result of school experiences. They may not, however, have a clear idea of other abilities they may possess or the implications these abilities may have for vocational choice.

Help students relate test performance to educational and vocational information. The educational and occupational norms developed using the GATB can be related to student test scores. Information presented to students in this way may take on personal significance, helping to broaden their occupational understanding and interests.

Provide students with information explaining how aptitudes relate to probable success in various vocational training programs. Performance on aptitude tests can be related to success in vocational programs by administering the GATB to students prior to course selection and then comparing test results at the completion of training to some objective measure of success. This data, refined yearly, can be used to provide students, who may be following in the program, with additional information about the vocational courses they may be considering. (For help in setting up a research design to provide this information contact Measurement and Evaluation Services, address below.)

Help students formulate tentative vocational goals and plans. Stability of vocational choice seems to relate to the degree a person understands his unique abilities and aspirations and can relate this understanding to clearly defined alternatives or choices. Using the GATB may be one means of helping students develop greater self understanding and knowledge of the world of work. This experience may help provide students with a better basis for formulating personal goals and making educational and vocational plans.

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